



FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
WASHINGTON D.C. 20463

JUL 22 2004

Charles F. Howell, President
Patriot National Bank
900 Bedford Street
Stamford, Connecticut 06901

RE: MUR 5453
Patriot National Bank

Dear Mr. Howell:

On May 18, 2004, the Federal Election Commission ("the Commission") found that there is reason to believe Patriot National Bank violated 2 U.S.C. § 441b(a), a provision of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended ("the Act"). The Factual and Legal Analysis, which formed a basis for the Commission's finding, is attached for your information.

You may submit any factual or legal materials that you believe are relevant to the Commission's consideration of this matter. Please submit such materials to the General Counsel's Office within 15 days of your receipt of this letter. Where appropriate, statements should be submitted under oath. In the absence of additional information, the Commission may find probable cause to believe that a violation has occurred and proceed with conciliation.

If you are interested in pursuing pre-probable cause conciliation, you should so request in writing. See 11 C.F.R. § 111.18(d). Upon receipt of the request, the Office of the General Counsel will make recommendations to the Commission either proposing an agreement in settlement of the matter or recommending declining that pre-probable cause conciliation be pursued. The Office of the General Counsel may recommend that pre-probable cause conciliation not be entered into at this time so that it may complete its investigation of the matter. Further, the Commission will not entertain requests for pre-probable cause conciliation after briefs on probable cause have been mailed to the respondent.

Requests for extensions of time will not be routinely granted. Requests must be made in writing at least five days prior to the due date of the response and specific good cause must be demonstrated. In addition, the Office of the General Counsel ordinarily will not give extensions beyond 20 days.

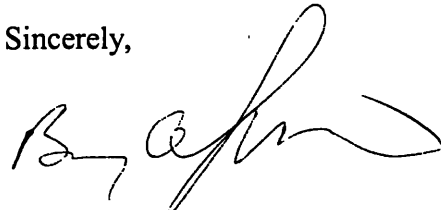
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If you intend to be represented by counsel in this matter, please advise the Commission by completing the enclosed form stating the name, address, and telephone number of such counsel, and authorizing such counsel to receive any notifications and other communications from the Commission.

This matter will remain confidential in accordance with 2 U.S.C. §§ 437g(a)(4)(B) and 437g(a)(12)(A), unless you notify the Commission in writing that you wish the investigation to be made public.

For your information, we have enclosed a brief description of the Commission's procedures for handling possible violations of the Act. If you have any questions, please contact Christine C. Gallagher, the attorney assigned to this matter, at (202) 694-1650.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bradley A. Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bradley A. Smith
Chairman

Enclosures

Factual and Legal Analysis

Procedures

Designation of Counsel Form

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FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

FACTUAL AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

RESPONDENT: Patriot National Bank

MUR: 5453

I. GENERATION OF THE MATTER

This matter was generated based on information ascertained by the Federal Election Commission ("the Commission") in the normal course of carrying out its supervisory responsibilities. See 2 U.S.C. § 437g(a)(2).¹ At issue is whether Patriot National Bank ("the Bank") made a prohibited bank loan to the Giordano for U.S. Senate Committee ("Committee") in violation of 2 U.S.C. § 441b(a).

II. BACKGROUND

Philip Giordano was a candidate for the office of United States Senator from Connecticut in the 2000 election. The Committee² filed a 2000 April Quarterly Report on April 19, 2000,

¹ All of the facts in this matter occurred prior to the effective date of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 ("BCRA"), Pub. L. 107-155, 116 Stat. 81 (2002). Accordingly, unless specifically noted to the contrary, all citations to the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended, ("the Act"), herein are as it read prior to the effective date of BCRA and all citations to the Commission's regulations herein are to the 2002 edition of Title 11, Code of Federal Regulations, which was published prior to the Commission's promulgation of any regulations under BCRA.

² According to Statements of Organization on file with the Commission, on February 8, 2000, James Paolino was named as treasurer of the Giordano Congressional Exploratory Committee. On March 17, 2000, Michael Blumenthal was named as treasurer of the Giordano for U.S. Senate Committee, the candidate's principal campaign committee. On July 15, 2000, Thomas M. Ariola, Jr. was named as deputy treasurer of the principal campaign committee. A subsequent letter from Mr. Paolino to the Commission explained that the 2000 July Quarterly Report marked the termination of the candidate's Exploratory Committee and the commencement of his principal campaign committee.

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disclosing a \$200,000 loan from the Bank, obtained on February 25, 2000.³ The Schedule C-1 included with the report showed the collateral for this loan as cash on deposit and future contributions to be received by the Committee. The Schedule C showed both the candidate and his father-in-law, Mr. Salvatore Trovato, as co-guarantors of the loan.⁴ Mr. Trovato was on the Board of Directors of the Bank at this time.⁵

By cover letter signed by the candidate, the Committee, on July 17, 2000, filed an amended 2000 July Quarterly Report, disclosing information about a loan incurred on July 14, 2000 from the Bank in the amount of \$300,000.⁶ The Schedule C-1 showed the collateral for the loan to be a certificate of deposit valued at \$300,000 and the Schedule C lists the candidate as guaranteeing the entire \$300,000. The attached loan document describes the collateral as "Patriot National Bank Certificate of Deposit in the Name of Dawn Giordano under Account No.

³ The Commission received an undated letter from Mr. Paolino stating that the Giordano Congressional Exploratory Committee obtained the original \$200,000 loan. The letter states, "in anticipation of the termination of the Exploratory Committee, the Giordano for U.S. Senate Committee has assumed this loan and increased its obligation to a total of \$300,000." For simplicity's sake, this analysis will refer to the loan as an obligation of "the Committee."

⁴ The Committee's 2000 July Quarterly Report, filed on July 10, 2000, continued to disclose the \$200,000 loan, but neither the candidate nor his father-in-law were listed as guarantors and the Schedule C-1 was blank.

⁵ The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission Form 10-K for Patriot National Bancorp, Inc., a one-bank holding company for Patriot National Bank, lists Mr. Trovato as one of the Directors for Bancorp for the Fiscal Year ending December 31, 2000. See also U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission Schedule 14A, Proxy Statement, April 28, 2000 (according to the Proxy Statement, Mr. Trovato has been Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Bancorp and Patriot National Bank since 1995, and owns 103,258 shares of stock, or 4.72% of Bancorp's outstanding shares); see also David Hammer, *Giordano Campaign Loan Faces Scrutiny*, REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN, August 5, 2001 (reported that Mr. Trovato holds 118,658 shares of stock of Patriot National Bancorp, Inc., equal to 4.89% of Bancorp's outstanding shares).

⁶ Although the Schedule C-1 accompanying the report states that the disclosed loan was not restructured, a Schedule C-1 filed with the Committee's Second Amended 2000 July Quarterly Report shows that the \$300,000 loan represented a restructuring of the loan incurred in February 2000. See also footnote 4.

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1 On August 30, 2000, the Committee filed a second amended 2000 July Quarterly Report,
2 which included a cover letter, a revised Schedule C-1 and copy of a revised loan agreement with
3 the Bank for the \$300,000 loan. Those documents appear to show that the collateral for the loan
4 was (1) the candidate's one-half interest in a certificate of deposit in the amount of \$300,000
5 (\$150,000), (2) the candidate's one-half interest in real estate owned by him and his spouse
6 (\$110,000), and possibly (3) the Committee's cash-on-hand or future contributions and receipts.⁷

7 The certificate of deposit is identified as a "Patriot National Bank Certificate of Deposit
8 in the names of Dawn Giordano & Philip A. Giordano under account, the same
9 account number in which the certificate of deposit in the name only of Dawn Giordano had
10 formerly been shown. The real property making up part of the collateral is a Mortgage of
11 Property located at 157 Southwind Road, Waterbury, Connecticut. An attached sheet to the
12 revised loan agreement appears to show an opening of an account on July 14, 2000 with an initial
13 deposit of a check for \$300,000, and a withholding statement signed only by Dawn Giordano.
14 On the same sheet, additional information is displayed for what appears to be account number
15 (the number is difficult to read) in the names of the candidate and his wife,
16 showing it to be a "certificate of deposit" type account, with the signature of the candidate
17 followed by the date of and the signature of his wife followed by the date of

⁷ The cover letter states that the Committee's cash-on-hand (then \$2,829.82) was also pledged as part of the collateral for the loan; however, the Schedule C-1 filed by the Committee states that future contributions and receipts in the amount of \$50,000 are pledged as collateral for the loan. The revised loan agreement does not mention either the Committee's cash-on-hand or future receipts as collateral for the loan. The Schedule C-1 states that the candidate's one-half value of the certificate of deposit and the real estate is valued at \$250,000. The Schedule C shows the candidate as the sole guarantor for the amount of \$300,000.

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1 The cover letter accompanying the August 30 filing purports to be proffering an
2 “addendum” to the Committee’s July 17, 2000 filing as an “attempt[] to correct all previous
3 errors and . . . to conform our report to FEC regulations.” According to the cover letter:

4 As you know, the previous report collateralized the loan above mentioned with a
5 Certificate of Deposit of \$300,000 held in the name of Dawn Ann Giordano,
6 Philip A. Giordano’s spouse. The Certificate of Deposit was a gift made to Mr.
7 and Mrs. Giordano from Mrs. Giordano’s father. Similar gifts were made to all
8 Mrs. Giordano’s siblings and their spouses. The Certificate was given jointly in
9 both names. This would allow us to collateralize \$150,000.00 of said loan with
10 Mr. Giordano’s half interest in the Certificate.

11
12 With respect to the portion of the collateral composed of the real estate owned by the
13 candidate and his wife, the cover letter states that the “fair market value of said premises is
14 estimated to be \$220,000 of which \$110,000.00 of equity is imputed to” the candidate. The loan
15 agreement itself does not show a fair market value for the real estate nor are there any
16 accompanying papers documenting a fair market value of \$220,000. The mortgage deed between
17 the Bank and the Giordanos, dated August 15, 2000, states that their arrangement is subject to an
18 encumbrance on the real estate consisting of a “Mortgage to Metro Mortgage Corporation in the
19 original principal amount of \$124,000.00 dated February 16, 1999.”

20 In response to two Requests for Additional Information (“RFAs”) dated September 19,
21 2000, and Second Notices dated October 12, 2000, the Committee filed amendments to its 2000
22 April and July Quarterly Reports on November 1, 2000.⁸ The cover letter dated October 28,
23 2000 states that the original \$200,000 loan, due to a misunderstanding on the part of the
24 campaign and the Bank, “was made in violation of FEC rules,” but that the “loan was corrected

⁸ The RFAI dated September 19, 2000 inquired about the original \$200,000 loan and asked the Committee to provide the Schedules C and C-1 pertaining to that loan. On November 27, 2000 the Committee amended its 2000 July Quarterly Report for a fourth time and included the Schedules C and C-1 as requested.

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as to FEC requirements and also increased to an indebtedness of \$300,000.” According to the cover letter, the \$300,000 loan

was secured with one half of a certificate of deposit held jointly by Mr. And [sic] Mrs. Giordano, on [sic] half the equity in Mr. and Mrs. Giordano’s jointly held home, and cash on deposit in the Senate Committee account. The bank was satisfied that this was adequate collateral for this line of credit. I am under the impression that this also satisfies FEC requirements. The certificate of deposit was originally a family gift given to the Giordano family. The timing of the gift coincided with a financial event with the family. It was not related to the Senate committee and would have happened regardless of the Senate race.

III. ANALYSIS

The available facts suggest that the Bank made a prohibited contribution to the Committee. The Act prohibits national banks from making contributions in connection with any election and prohibits any candidate, political committee, or other person knowingly to accept or receive any such contributions. 2 U.S.C. § 441b(a). A loan by a national bank is not a contribution by the lending institution if it is made in accordance with applicable banking laws and regulations and is made in the ordinary course of business. 11 C.F.R. § 100.7(b)(11). A loan will be deemed to be made in the ordinary course of business if, among other things, it is made on a basis which assures repayment. *Id.* A loan shall be considered “made on a basis which assures repayment” if the lending institution making the loan has perfected a security interest in collateral owned by the candidate or political committee receiving the loan, the fair market value of the collateral is equal to or greater than the loan amount and any senior liens as determined on the date of the loan, and the candidate or political committee provide documentation to show that the lending institution has a perfected security interest in the collateral. 11 C.F.R. § 100.7(b)(11)(i)(A)(I).

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1 Taking into consideration the certificate of deposit and the real estate purportedly
2 collateralizing \$150,000 and \$110,000, respectively, of the \$300,000 loan from the Bank, the
3 collateral listed in the loan agreement falls short by approximately \$40,000. First, the
4 candidate's share of the certificate of deposit is, at most, \$150,000. Second, with regard to the
5 real estate portion of the collateral, the revised loan agreement showed a \$124,000 preexisting
6 mortgage on the property in 1999. Although the principal balance of the mortgage likely had
7 fallen slightly by 2000, for purposes of this analysis, and assuming that \$220,000 was indeed the
8 property's fair market value, the candidate's equity in the home appears to have been
9 approximately one-half of \$220,000 (FMV) minus \$124,000 (the amount of the mortgage), or
10 \$48,000, rather than the \$110,000 stated as collateral for the loan. It appears from the loan
11 documents that the Bank knew of the previous mortgage on the real estate, and took its secured
12 interest subject to it, reducing even further the known value of the candidate's equity in the
13 property. Third, there are discrepancies in the Committee's disclosure reports as well as in the
14 bank's loan documents as to whether the Committee's cash-on-hand and/or future receipts were
15 pledged as collateral for the loan. Lastly, based on the candidate's father-in-law's position as a
16 member of the Bank's Board, questions arise concerning his possible participation in, or
17 influence over, the granting of a possible substandard loan.

18 Therefore, there is reason to believe the Patriot National Bank violated 2 U.S.C.
19 § 441b(a).

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